

AL-I-C-076

1927

Paw Paw Bridge
vicinity of Paw Paw
public (unrestricted)

The Paw Paw Bridge, which carries Route 51 across the Potomac River from Allegany County, Maryland to Paw Paw, West Virginia, consists of three large steel truss sections, a central 8-panel Parker Truss of 199 feet, and two identical 4-panel Pratt Trusses of 109 feet each. The bridge was erected in 1927 by the State Roads Commission in conjunction with Allegany County, under the chairmanship of Clinton Uhl and D.P. Lefevre, engineer.

This bridge represents one of two historic truss bridges -- part of Maryland's state road system in Allegany County, and one of 26 bridges of the same structural type throughout the state road network -- identified by the Maryland Historical Trust for the Maryland Department of Transportation in a jointly conducted survey during 1980-81.

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON

Paw Paw Bridge

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Maryland Route 51

CITY, TOWN

Paw Paw

☒ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

6th

STATE

West Virginia

COUNTY

Allegany

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT☐ BUILDING(S)☒ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☒ PUBLIC☐ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☐ YES: RESTRICTED☒ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ MUSEUM☐ COMMERCIAL☐ PARK☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ RELIGIOUS☐ GOVERNMENT☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ INDUSTRIAL☒ TRANSPORTATION☐ MILITARY☐ OTHER**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

State Highway Administration

Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER

301 West Preston Street

CITY, TOWN

Baltimore

☐ VICINITY OF

Maryland

STATE, zip code

21201

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Allegany County Courthouse

Liber #:

Folio #:

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Cumberland

STATE

Maryland

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

RL-I-C-076

CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT
☒ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☒ UNALTERED
☐ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Paw Paw bridge carries Maryland Route 51, running NW and SE at this point, across the Potomac River from Allegany County, Maryland to Paw Paw West Virginia. The bridge consists of three large steel truss sections, a central 8-panel Parker Truss of 199 feet, and two identical 4-panel pratt trusses of 109 feet each. These are supported by concrete junctures, as are the five 40 feet concrete girders which bring the structure to the West Virginia shore. All joints are riveted. The structural members of the Parker truss are heavier than those of the Pratts.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

PERIOD

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1927

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Allegany Co., Roads Comm.,
(Clinton Uhl, Chairman,
D.P. Lefevre, engineer)

This large composite bridge was designed by the engineers of the State Roads Commission of West Virginia (according to the title block of the existing drawings now on file at SHA) but credit for its construction is given to the County Roads Directors by the bridge plaque located on the inclined end post of the first Pratt truss. The name Clinton Uhl, this time in association with Allegany County, appears on numerous other steel bridges of this period in Western Maryland.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

see continuation sheet,

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

Quadrangle Name: Paw Paw, MD

Quadrangle Scale: 1:24 000

UTM References: 17.718640.4379450

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

John Hnedak/M/DOT Survey Manager

ORGANIZATION

Maryland Historical Trust

DATE

1980

STREET & NUMBER

21 State Circle

TELEPHONE

(301) 269-2438

CITY OR TOWN

Annapolis

STATE

Maryland 21401

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438

G. Clinton Uhl (1871-1934)

This bridge has been associated with the name of Clinton Uhl, either by direct reference or by the coincidence of its date of construction with Mr. Uhl's tenure as chairman of the State Roads Commission.

Mr. Uhl's life is but sketchily known at present. His name is physically incised on more bridges of this period than that of any other individual, and it may be inferred that he was to some not-inconsiderable extent responsible for the shape taken by the state's road and bridge system in the middle 1930s, and possibly, at least in terms of construction policy, for some time beyond that.

From Uhl's obituary, found in the Baltimore Sun of 6 August 1934, we learn that he became interested in roads at age 20 because of difficulties encountered while trying to execute the duties of a delivery boy, in the employ of the McMullen Brothers of Cumberland. He was sufficiently energetic and ambitious to establish "Clinton Uhl and Company", a general store; the Maryland Shoe Company; both in Cumberland; the Greenbriar Quarry; and the Mt. Savage Fuel Company. He became a member of the board of road directors of Allegany County in 1905. In 1916 he was appointed to the State Roads Commission, becoming its chairman in 1929 and serving until his death. The one dark spot in his career seems to have been an accusation by a West Virginia contractor that he (the contractor) was denied a contract for refusing to buy stone from the Greenbriar Quarry. Uhl was cleared of all charges of misconduct with the help of Governor Ritchie. The roads of Allegany were considered to be the best in the State during Uhl's tenure there.

GENERAL BRIDGE SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of bridges in Maryland is a difficult and subtle thing to gauge. The Modified significance criteria of the National Register, which are the standard for these judgements in Maryland, as in most states, must be broadly applied to allow for most of these structures. In particular the 50 year rule which specifies a minimum age for structures can be waived, and is more commonly done so for engineering structures than for others. Questions of uniqueness and typicality, exemplary types, etc., must set aside for now, because they presuppose a wider knowledge of the entire resources than is presently available. Indeed, this survey is an initial step toward understanding the extent to which Maryland's bridges are part of her cultural resources. Aesthetic considerations may have to be side-stepped entirely, for such structures as these are generally considered mundane and ordinary at best, and sometimes a negative landscape feature, by the layman. It does take a specialized aesthetic sense to appreciate such structures on visual grounds, but a case for visual significance can be made. The remaining criteria are those of historical associations. The relative youth of most of these structures precludes a strong likelihood of participation to events and lives of import. The best generalization can be made for most bridges is that they are built on site of early crossings, developing from fords and ferries through covered bridges and wooden trusses to their present state. This significance inheres in the site, however, and in most cases would not be diminished by the adsense of the present structure.

These criteria may also be addressed positively. The primary significance of these bridges, those which were built between the two World Wars, consists in their association with rapidly changing modes and trends in transportation in America during the period. The earliest of them saw the appearance of the automobile and its rise as the preëminent means of getting Americans from place to place. Roads were being improved for increased speeds and capacity, and bridges, as potential weak links on the system, became particularly important. The technology for producing them was not new, and would not change significantly during the period. Accordingly, great numbers of easily, quickly and relatively cheaply built concrete slab, beam and arch bridges were built to span the samll crossings, or were multiplied to cover longer crossings where height was no problem.

Truss bridges with major structural members of compound beams, of either the Warren or Pratt types, while more expensive and considered more intrusive on the landscape, were built to span the larger gaps.

With an aesthetic which allowed concrete slab bridges to have classical balustrades, or the application of a jazz-age concrete relief; with the considerable variety possible in the construction of medium sized metal trusses; and with the lack of nationwide standards for highway bridge design, the resulting body of structures displays considerable variety. The sameness of appearance of currently produced highway bridges leads one to believe this variety will not reappear. For that reason alone it is wise to keep watch over our existing bridges. Regardless of ones taste and aesthetic preference, one must be admitted that these older bridges add their variety and visual interest to the environment as a whole, and that it is often the case that their replacement by a standard highway bridge results in a visual hole in the landscape.

In situations requiring decisions of potential effect on these structures, they should receive some consideration. As the recording and subsequent understanding of Maryland's Cultural resources grows, they will be recognized as a significant part of that heritage.

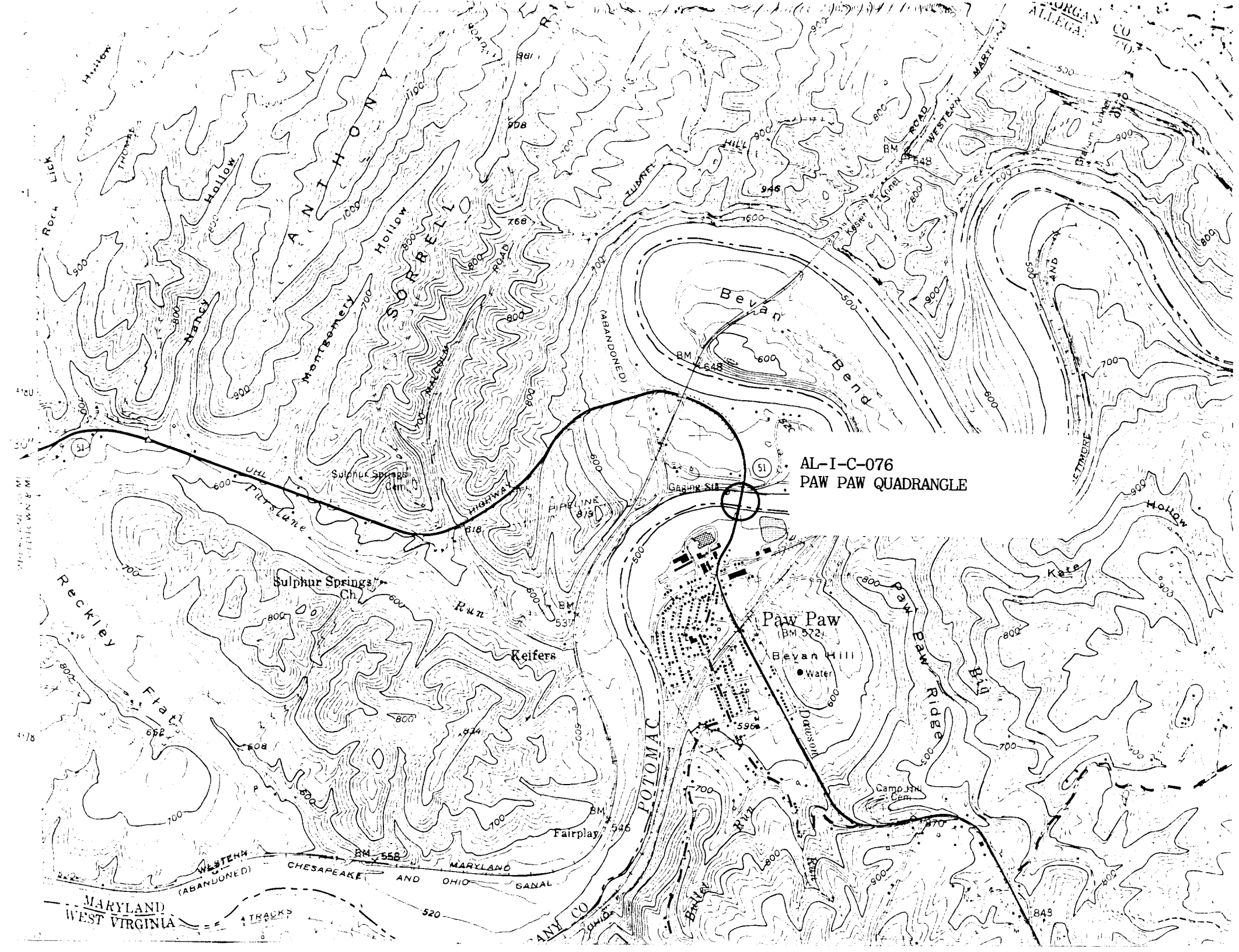
It should be noted that two non-negligible classes of structure have been omitted from this set. The first is the huge number of concrete slab or beam bridges of an average of twenty feet or less in length. These are so nearly ubiquitous and of such minor visual impact (they are often easy to drive across without noticing) that they were not inventoried. They are considered in the general recommendations section of the final report of this survey, however.

The second category is that of the "great" bridges, the huge steel crossings of the major waterways. While they are awesome and aesthetically appealing, they are not included in this inventory because they do not share the problems of their more modest counterparts. They do not lack for recognition, they have not been technologically outmoded, and are in no danger of disappearing through replacement. In a sense, they are not as rare; hundreds of

these great bridges are known nationally, and there is little doubt as to the position of any one bridge within national spectrum. There seems little point in including them with the larger inventory of bridges. From an arbitrary point of view, their dates are outside the 1935 limit which we set for the consideration of bridges. We have departed from that limit on occasion, but will not in this case. These bridges, too, will be considered in the final report.

Moveable bridges deserve a special note regarding their significance. They are rare, and all but the most recent of them have been listed by this survey by virtue of that fact alone. They are, by their nature as intermittent impediments to the smooth flow of traffic, threatened. We rarely tolerate disruptions to what we perceive as our progress. This has been demonstrated recently by the replacement of the drawbridge at Denton, on one of the major routes to the Atlantic Coast from the rest of Maryland.

However much we are inconvenienced by them, we must admit that moveable bridges contribute a share of interest to the landscape. As with significance judgements in general, we here enter a realm which is governed by taste and opinion. Some of us might not enjoy being forced to sit back for a while to look at the surroundings which we would otherwise totally ignore, especially if the engine is in danger of boiling over. But there are those who are fascinated by the slow rise of a great chunk of roadway, moved by quit, often invisible machinery; who are amused by the tip of the mast which skims the top of the temporary wall; or who reflect on the nobility inherent in a river and the fact that we have not subdued every waterway with our autos, while knowing that we can if we want to.





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PAW PAW BRIDGE
M/DOT
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